



PRESS RELEASE

USS KITTY HAWK (CV 63)
Public Affairs Office
FPO AP 96634-2770

E-mail: pao@kitty-hawk.navy.mil
Web: www.kittyhawk.navy.mil



For Immediate Release
Release: 06-072

Aug. 21, 2006

CVW-5 pilots stay sharp in Lancelin Defense Training Area

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Matthew Reinhardt, Kitty Hawk public affairs

USS KITTY HAWK, At Sea -- Carrier Air Wing 5 pilots are honing their combat skills at the Lancelin Defense Training Area (LDTA) in Western Australia. The LDTA consists of bombing ranges and coastal land about 140 kilometers, or 87 miles, north of Perth that the Australian Defense Force has used since 1943.

Air wing pilots have been using the LDTA since Aug. 6, but took a short break from training while the Yokosuka, Japan-based USS Kitty Hawk (CV 63) pulled into Fremantle, Australia, Aug. 10. The carrier's jets and helicopters returned to the ranges Aug. 14.

According to Lt. Cmdr. James McCall, a forward air control (airborne) (FAC-A) instructor with Strike Fighter Squadron 102, Lancelin is the first training range where air wing pilots have been allowed to drop live ordnance under realistic scenarios in more than two years. The nearest range for live ordnance to the air wing's home base, Naval Air Facility Atsugi, Japan, is over 300 miles away in Okinawa. That bombing range consists of flat islands with no definable targets, and provides limited tactical training for pilots, said McCall. However, Lancelin uses real vehicles, giving pilots a feel for what it is like to pinpoint and attack an actual target.

"I've been in this command for 18 months," said McCall, "and this is the best air-to-ground training I've seen."

McCall said air wing pilots are conducting three types of training at LDTA. FAC-A training consists of one aircraft directing another that is actively engaged with enemy ground forces. Pilots in another type of training, close air support, practice dropping ordnance on simulated enemy troops engaged in combat with friendly troops. These close air support missions requires extreme precision to avoid friendly casualties, said McCall. During the final type of training, combat search and rescue operations, aircraft simulate the rescue of survivors from hostile territory.

Australian special forces worked with the pilots during some bombing operations. The ground troops used laser designators called "mules" to mark bombing locations. Aircraft dropped both

live and practice munitions on these designated targets. While using ordnance in Lancelin, air wing pilots adhere to certain safety regulations while operating.

“Safety is a top priority since civilian populated areas are both north and south of the designated training area,” said Craig.

Training in different areas around the world is important for mission readiness, according to Lt. Andrew Craig, an F/A-18C pilot with Strike Fighter Squadron 192. Craig said even the rough winter seas near Lancelin added that much more training for pilots.

“The best training we got in this operation is landing aircraft on the pitching flight deck,” said Craig. “Even the best pilot in the world can have trouble landing if the deck is pitching 18 to 20 feet.”

The Kitty Hawk Strike Group is the largest carrier strike group in the Navy and is composed of the Kitty Hawk, air wing and guided-missile cruisers USS Chancellorsville (CG 62) and USS Cowpens (CG 63), and Destroyer Squadron 15 staff.

To find more news about the Kitty Hawk Strike Group, visit the Navy NewsStand at www.news.navy.mil/local/cv63/.

###